

# Letting Go of Contention

I felt justified in my anger toward my roommate, but I didn't want these bitter feelings weighing me down.

By Afton Nelson

I was so mad. Living with college roommates always had its difficulties, but Wendy (name has been changed) seemed to be one of the most challenging roommates ever. No matter how hard I tried, I found myself irritated and angry more and more often. This particular morning, though, I'd finally had it.

I stewed as I got ready for classes, and my attitude continued

to deteriorate. I began to compile a mental list of all of Wendy's shortcomings, getting more and more upset with each one I thought of.

I ate breakfast alone, since all my other roommates had already left for class. Then I gathered everything I would need for the day into my book bag. I grabbed my scriptures and threw them in the bag, and they landed with an awkward thump. I realized that my anger was affecting me in a way I didn't like. I remembered the scripture from 3 Nephi 11:29: "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another."

I realized that my attitude of contention was driving the Spirit away. I didn't want to feel this way anymore. I wanted to be happy and worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. I knelt at the side of my bed and prayed for forgiveness. But I also

prayed for help. What could I do to get these feelings of anger toward my roommate to go away?

The answer came: Serve her.

That was the last thing I wanted to do, but I followed the prompting. I stood up and looked around the room. What could I do to serve Wendy right now? I noticed she had not made her bed that morning, and so I decided I would do it for her. Would she even notice? I immediately realized it didn't matter. I wanted the feeling of contention in my heart to go away, not earn Wendy's gratitude. This change of perspective helped me realize that even if we both needed a change of heart, I only had control over my own. Suddenly I was eager to serve her.

I tucked in the blankets and smoothed out the bedspread and fluffed the pillow, just as if I were making my own bed. I did the best job I could. Then, when I was done, I fished a bag of candy out of my book bag. I'd been looking forward to

eating it, but as I placed it on Wendy's pillow, I felt a weight lift from me. I felt the Spirit return and the anger in my heart start to dissipate.

Wendy and I were never best friends, but that was OK. I learned that day that I didn't have to let anger

and contention keep me from feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost in my life. I could choose to let go of unkind feelings and choose to be happy, even if my circumstances were not ideal. ■

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## HOW WE SHOULD TREAT OTHERS

“Kindness is how a Christlike person treats

others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes. . . .

“When we are filled with kindness, we are not judgmental. The Savior taught, ‘Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven’ [Luke 6:37]. . . .

“‘But,’ you ask, ‘what if people are rude?’

“Love them.

“‘If they are obnoxious?’

“Love them.

“‘But what if they offend?

Surely I must do something then?’

“Love them.

“‘Wayward?’

“The answer is the same. Be kind. Love them.

“Why? In the scriptures Jude taught, ‘And of some have compassion, making a difference’ [Jude 1:22].

“Who can tell what far-reaching impact we can have if we are only kind?”

**Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 26, 28.**